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NOTES ON THE
ORNITHOLOGY OF THE SEASONS,
AS ILLUSTRATED BY THE ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE
OF SOME OF OUR MIGRATORY LAND BIRDS.

BY G. W. ALLAN.

(Read before the Canadian Institute, January 17th, 1885).

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SOME OF OUR MIGRATORY BIRDS.

BY G. W. ALLAN.

There are few subjects connected with bird life, more interesting than the migration of these denizens of the woods and fields, as they come to us in Spring after many months of absence—or leave us again at the approach of autumn or the keen air of early winter to wend their way back to milder and more genial climates. To an observant lover of nature there is an especial charm in the recognition of the first notes of each winged visitant, heard almost before they are seen, and bringing back life and melody to our woods and fields after the long silence of winter; and so again in autumn, there seems to be a peculiar plaintiveness in the call-notes of the gathering flocks, as if bidding us farewell before setting out on their long journey.

Even winter, however, with its frosts and snows has its visitors, coming from still colder latitudes, spending a few brief weeks with us, and at the first approach of the sunny days and soft airs of spring, wending their way back to the far North.

In the limits of a paper such as this I shall not attempt to offer anything like an exhaustive list of our birds of passage, I shall confine myself to giving, as it were, a rough sketch of the ornithological characteristics of each month as marked by the arrival or departure of some of the various species of our land birds.

To begin with the year, for winter, as I have said, has its visitors as well as summer, and from the icy shores of Greenland, and the frozen north, comes to us that beautiful little bird, the Snow Bunting (*Plectrophanes Nivalis*), the harbinger of cold and stormy weather. Flying generally in large flocks, as their bodies are seen against the blue sky, they look almost like large snow flakes drifting before the wind.

So associated are they with storm and cold that in northern

Europe where they are also found in great numbers in winter, they go by the name, among the Swedes, of "Illwarsfogel" or bad weather birds !

The time of their arrival here varies with the character of the weather. In very cold winters I have seen them as early as 10th and 15th of December, and I have known them to remain in some seasons as late as the first week in March. They are said to make their appearance in Hudson's Bay at the end of March or early in April remaining there for a few weeks and then wending their way still further north to breed on the shores of Greenland or even desolate Spitzbergen ! As the food of these birds consists almost entirely of seeds of various wild plants, their means of subsistence amidst the deep snows of winter would seem to be precarious enough. Nevertheless they become very fat, and in the Province of Quebec, where they are found in much greater numbers than here, they are slaughtered most mercilessly for the market, and among our French friends "snowbirds on toast," I am sorry to say, form a standing entree in the bill of fare of a fashionable dinner.

The snowy owl (*Nyctea Scandiaca*), one of the most beautiful of our rapacious birds, is another winter visitor, at one time very common even in this neighborhood. I have seen them in considerable numbers on the Island on the other side of our Toronto Bay in the months of December and January. Nothing can exceed the exquisite softness and beauty of their thick, warm plumage, which enables them to bid defiance to the severest cold, and as they are not over nice in their choice of food, rats, mice, fish and small birds, all seeming to come alike, they are in no danger of starving even in the most wintry weather.

During this and the next month when strolling through the park or even through some of our streets, where bordered by trees or gardens, the attention of the passer-by may sometimes be attracted by the very sweet and melodious call-notes of two or three handsome birds, busily engaged in feeding upon the tender buds of a maple or stripping off the berries of the mountain ash, and if his curiosity induces him to approach them more closely (and they are often extremely tame and fearless) he cannot but be struck with the beauty of the plumage of some of the number, the head and upper part of the breast and back of the male birds more especially being beautifully marked with delicate shades of orange and crimson. These

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birds are the Pine Grosbeak (*Pinicola Enucleator*), a rare visitor in some years, but in severe winters it comes to us in considerable numbers, being met with, not only in our woods, but sometimes venturing fearlessly, as I have said, into the streets and squares of our towns. They occasionally do a good deal of mischief to the young buds of both fruit and ornamental trees.

During a very severe winter many years ago these birds came into my own grounds in great numbers. Observing that wherever any withered apples were left hanging on the trees in the orchard they were eagerly attacked and torn to pieces by the Grosbeaks, apparently for the sake of the seeds, I had a quantity of apples cut up and strewed on the steps of the verandah of the house, and before long I had as many as ten or a dozen of these beautiful birds feeding at the same time, and so tame and fearless did they become, that they would allow the members of the family to watch them from the windows. They did not, however, always content themselves with the food thus provided for them, but did a good deal of mischief that winter to the young buds of the cherry and apple as well as many of the ornamental trees. They leave us generally about the end of March.

The Bohemian Wax-Wing (*Ampelis Garrulus*), is another rare winter visitor only appearing in seasons when extreme cold has driven it down from more northern latitudes. In plumage it resembles very closely the Cedar Bird, common Wax-wing, or Cherry Bird (*Ampelis Cedrorum*), so well known, as an active depredator in our gardens and orchards. The Bohemian Wax-Wing, however, is considerably larger and the colouring of the plumage, though very similar, is richer and deeper. It has the same curious horny tips like red sealing wax on the secondaries of the wings.

The Crossbills, both the Red Crossbill (*Loxia Curvirostra Americana*), and the White-winged (*Loxia Leucoptera*), have been classed as winter visitors only in Ontario, and so has that elegant little bird the Pine Finch (*Chrysomitris Pinus*). I have met with all three, however, in the neighbourhood of Lake Simcoe during the summer, and the Crossbills undoubtedly breed in the pine and Hemlock woods and may be seen there all throughout the year.

The last of our winter visitors that I shall notice is the Shore Lark (*Eremophila Alpestris*). Speaking from my own experience, it is not often met with in this part of Ontario, though it is found

occasionally and in low and marshy grounds on the shores of the lake, and I have also seen it frequently in the neighbourhood of Ottawa.

It feeds on the seeds of various grasses and weeds, and such insects as it can obtain at this season. Its call note is very soft and melodious, and I have heard the male bird in the early days of March utter a short but very sweet song. It is then just on the point of setting off on its migration northward and its plumage has begun to assume something of its summer brightness, the black tufts of feathers on the head and the crescent shaped patch of black on the throat of the male bird are then very conspicuous.

Sometimes as early as the last week of February, though generally in the first warm days in March the cawing of the crows is heard for the first time, and their harsh voices sound pleasantly to our ears because they are associated with the commencement of spring.

It is true that occasionally in very mild winters one or two individuals do sometimes remain in particular localities, but these are exceptions to the general rule and they may fairly be classed among our migratory birds.

I have said that their voices sound pleasantly because they are associated with the coming spring, but for my own part, I confess, it is only at that particular season that I can listen to them with any degree of complacency. They are then doing good service in feeding upon noxious insects and vermin of many kinds, but as the spring advances and the various small birds begin to lay their eggs and hatch their young, the crow becomes the ruthless destroyer of both eggs and young, and scores of the eggs or young of our Song Sparrows, Warblers, Thrushes and various other birds fall a prey to its voracious appetite.

First among the arrivals in March of our smaller migratory birds is the Song Sparrow (*Melospiza Fasciata*), and its short but sweet song is the first to proclaim "that the winter is over and gone, and the time of the singing of birds is come." The time of its arrival, as I have noted it in various years, varies from the 16th to the 23rd of March, sometimes, in very backward springs, not until the first week in April.

Almost at the same time with the Song Sparrow comes the Robin (*Turdus Migratorius*), its cheery notes, whether heard from the top of some tall maple, or as it scuttles through the bushes of the shrub-

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bery, or pipes its evening song from the roof of some lofty building, is one of the most welcome sounds in Spring. Indeed I know of none among all our feathered visitors so worthy of being cherished and protected. It comes about our lawns and dwellings, and if only unmolested will build its nest and lay its eggs and hatch its young under the very eyes of the household. Its cheerful notes are the first we hear on waking, for the Robin is abroad at early dawn, and through the live long day it is going and coming in quest of food for itself or its young, stopping every now and again for a short snatch of cheery song, and then, as the sun goes down, perched on some tree, or it may be high up on the gable of some lofty building, it will pour forth its sweet notes continuously—sometimes for half an hour or more; the last of all the grove to relapse into silence. The quantities of grubs, caterpillars, cutworms, crickets and grasshoppers which are captured and devoured by the Robin and other thrushes is something marvellous; and as the Robin not unfrequently raises three broods in the year, his species must destroy more of these insects than almost all other birds put together. Notwithstanding all this because the Robin occasionally treats itself to a few strawberries or cherries or grapes by way of dessert, it has been proscribed in some places by the fruit growers, who have had influence enough to persuade our local legislature to take it out of the list of insectivorous birds protected by law, and allow, in the words of the act, "Any person during the fruit season to shoot and destroy the Birds known as the Robin and the Cherry Bird." It is scarcely fair to the Robin to put it in such company, though even the Cherry Bird, with all its fondness for fruit, assists in ridding our fruit trees of a host of insect enemies which infest them. In the case of the Robin, however, I have repeatedly, again and again, watched it while feeding its young—earth-worms, grubs, vine-worms, caterpillars and other insect food were being brought all day long, and on these the young birds were fed exclusively, and when it is borne in mind that the Robin, as I have already stated, not unfrequently raises three broods in the year, their services in the destruction of insect pests must more than pay three times over for all the fruit they devour.

Quickly following upon the arrival of the Robins comes the Blue Bird (*Sialia Sialis*). Not so bold and fearless as the Robin, it does not come about our dwellings and grounds in quite the same

familiar way ; nevertheless, it is a sociable, gentle bird, and if unmolested will build and rear its young in the same spot, under the eaves of some out-building, or in a deserted Martin's box or even a knothole in a fence post.

For several years when the large rustic pavilion was standing in the centre of the Horticultural Society's Gardens the Blue Birds used to build regularly every season among the rafters of the roof, and their soft warbling notes could be heard all through the summer as, perched on the ridge, they dressed and plumed their feathers after returning from the capture of some moth or grasshopper or other insect prey.

Sometimes in the last days of March, though generally not until the 3rd, 6th or 7th of April, comes an old friend, familiar to most of us from boyhood, the Pee-wee, Fly-Catcher (*Sayornis Fusca*). Although it has but the one plaintive note, *pee-wee*, sometimes long-drawn out, and then changing into a little tremulous, murmuring twitter, as flying down from its perch on the housetop, or the gable of some old barn, it snaps up a passing insect, yet few sounds of bird voices are pleasanter to the lover of nature, for it is suggestive of warmth and sunshine, the waking up of insect life and all the gladness and freshness of spring. What should render this Fly-Catcher a special favourite with us is the tameness and familiarity with which it harbours about our dwellings, and its attachment to the same spot wherein to build its nest year after year ; it may be under the eaves of the barn or stable, or, as if boldly claiming our protection, it will attach its fabric of mud and moss, and fine grasses, to some convenient ledge under the roof of our verandahs, where its proceedings may be watched day by day by all the inmates of the house.

By the 5th or 10th of April the Tree Sparrow (*Spizella Monticola*), and the Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella Domestica*), have made their appearance. The latter well merits its epithet of *Domestica*, for it is one of the tamest and most sociable of our feathered friends, and under the name of "grey bird" is known to almost every child in the country. No sweeter song is heard at this season of the year than the warbling of that handsome bird, the Purple Finch, *Carpodacus Purpureus*), which, although it may occasionally be seen in a very mild winter in company with the Siskin, or Crossbills, yet is a sufficiently rare winter bird to make its advent the more marked.

when April comes, and we catch sight of the handsome cock-bird on some bright morning in his full livery of shaded crimson, perched on the topmost bough of an apple tree, and pouring forth a succession of sweet, warbling notes, sometimes for half an hour together. Like the Pine Grosbeak, the Purple Finch occasionally commits great depredations on the buds of our fruit trees ; and later in the season, when the cherries are ripe, it rivals the Waxen Chatterer in its devotion to that fruit. The plumage of the adult male is very handsome : The head, neck, breast, back, and upper tail coverts are a rich, deep lake, approaching to purplish crimson on the head and neck, and fading into rose colour on the belly. The quills and larger wing coverts are deep brown, edged with purplish red ; and the tail feathers are deep brown, similarly margined.

That curious bird, the Towee Bunting, or Ground Robin, as it is sometimes called (*Pipilo Erythrophthalmus*), reaches us early in April. I have generally found it in clearings on sandy tracts, such as the Humber plains, partly overgrown with scrub oak and pine, where, among the withered leaves and underbrush, it passes much of its time searching for worms, and the larvæ of different insects and uttering the peculiar note of Towee-towee.

As the power of the sun becomes sensibly felt, and in spite of cold winds and an occasional night's frost, there is an increasing mildness and softness in the atmosphere, on some bright morning we unexpectedly hear a cheery twittering note above our heads, the Swallows have come ! and despite of the old adage, we are ready to welcome the arrival of these harbingers of summer as a sure pledge that all frost and cold are over, and warmth and sunshine will now be ours.

The first to make their appearance of the swallow tribe are the White-bellied Swallow (*Iodoprocne Bicolor*), and the Sand Martin, (*Cotile Riparia*). They both arrive nearly at the same time, about the 9th or 10th of April, though I have the arrival of the White-bellied Swallow noted in my diary one year on the 30th of March.

The Barn Swallow (*Hirundo Erythrogaster Horreorum*), comes next, about 15th of April. The purple Martin (*Progne Subis*), and the Swift or Chimney Swallow (*Chætura Pelasgica*), are generally the last to arrive, about the 20th of April, sometimes not until the very end of the month, though again I have the Purple Martin down one year as reaching us on the 9th of April.

The Purple Martin is a bold, fearless bird, attacking even hawks and crows when they come in his way. Its flight unites in it, all the swiftness, ease, rapidity of turning and gracefulness of motion of its tribe. It is well known or used to be well known to all dwellers in town and country as the constant tenant of the numerous bird boxes, or swallow-houses which are erected, sometimes on the sign board of the Village Inn, or on some out-building in the farm yard, or even in the streets of the town. Of late years, however, I fear that the English Sparrow has to some extent ousted the Martin from its old quarters in the towns, for, though no match individually, the sparrows by their numbers and pertinacity so worry and disgust the bigger bird as ultimately to drive it away. A few years ago a pair of Martins occupied a two story bird house in the yard attached to the Canada Company's office. There were many battles at first between the Sparrows and the Martins, but at last they seemed to come to a compromise, and the Sparrows occupied one story and the Martins the other, and brought up their respective broods without further fighting. Since then, however, the Martins have never returned and I cannot help suspecting that the same results may have followed in other places, for the bird certainly seems to be less numerous than in former years.

The Blackbirds and Grakles now make their appearance, and the reedy borders of our ponds and marshes, and the neighbouring woods are filled with these noisy birds. The Cow Blackbird (*Molothrus ater*) arrives first. The Swamp Blackbird or Red Wing Blackbird (*Agelaius Phoeniceus*) sometimes in the last days in March, but more frequently about the 9th or 10th of April, and the Grackle or Crow Blackbird a little later. Little parties of the Cow Blackbird may be seen on fine mornings visiting the pasture fields and lawns, running about the grass in search of insects larvae and worms, and betaking themselves at nightfall, to roost among the tall reeds and sedges on the margin of some swamp or river. This bird like the Cuckoo of Europe follows the singular custom of not making a nest of its own, but deposits its eggs, one at a time, in the nest of some other bird, leaving them to the care of a foster parent. When the female is about to deposit her eggs, she moves about uneasily from tree to tree until she discovers a nest from which the rightful owner is absent at the moment, and then quietly drops in her egg and flies off. It never deposits more than one egg in the same nest,

although it is probable it thus leaves several in different nests. The birds employed as foster parents are all smaller than the Cow Blackbird—the Chipping Sparrow, the Maryland Yellow Throat, and some of the smaller species of Fly Catcher are among those most favoured, the Chipping Sparrow perhaps most frequently with us. As the young blackbird grows up it is provided for by its foster parents with all the care and assiduity that would be displayed towards their own offspring, and long after it has left the nest it continues to be fed by its affectionate guardians.

Frequently where the Chipping Sparrow has been the foster mother I have seen the tiny little bird carefully placing some choice worm or dainty insect in the open mouth of its great clumsy fluttering nursling, nearly half as big again as itself, whose sooty brown colour, as well as its size, offered a curious contrast to the delicately marked plumage and pretty slender form of its foster mother.

The Marsh Blackbird is well known to all by the extremely handsome plumage of the male bird, and any visitor to the meadows or marshes in the neighborhood of the Humber or the Don must be familiar with the peculiar song, if song it can be called, of "quonk-a-ree," sometimes uttered by half a dozen birds at a time from early dawn to midnight.

The Crow Blackbird or Purple Grackle (*Quiscalus purpureus*), although its food consists at some seasons of larvæ, caterpillars, moths and beetles, is the most mischievous to the farmers' crops of all the blackbirds, and is a serious nuisance in some of the localities in which they abound.

About the 10th or 15th of April, sometimes a few days earlier, if the season is favourable, the Grass Finch or Bay-winged Bunting (*Poæcetes Gramineus*) arrives, and soon makes its presence known by its deliciously sweet song, which may be heard all through this and the next month in our fields and open pastures and the borders of our woods, from "morn till dewy eve," being like the robin fond of pouring out a last farewell to the closing day. Its neatly built nest placed usually under a tussock of grass, constructed of fine grasses and roots bent and twined together, and the whole lined with hair-like roots and grass, may be met with in the open pastures or fields, sometimes as early as the end of April or the first week in May.

As the month advances fresh notes from new arrivals continually

strike upon the ear. Strolling through the garden or the orchard we may hear a low, sweet, soft call-note like that of a tame Canary, followed immediately by a rapid joyous warbling, it is the American Gold Finch (*Astragalinus tristis*). This pretty, elegant, little creature, like the Purple Finch, sometimes, though rarely, lingers with us through a very mild winter, but generally they move off in large flocks to the south at the approach of autumn and do not return to us until towards the middle or end of April. The cock bird when in full plumage is one of the handsomest of our songsters, and unlike many others of our more gaily plumaged birds sings with great sweetness.

As April draws to a close and we pass into May, if the weather be warm and genial, not only the woods but our gardens and shrubberies are suddenly full of a host of charming little visitors, most of whom tarry for a very brief space disappearing again in a week or two, journeying on towards their northern breeding places. I allude to that large family the *Sylvicolidae* or "Warblers," some of which remain with us all through the summer, but large numbers of them merely pass through on their way northward in spring, and again on their return journey to the south in autumn.

Among the latter I may refer to a few which I have observed both in this neighbourhood and in the woods about Lake Simcoe. The Black Throated Green Warbler (*Dendræca Virens*), and the Yellow Rumped or Golden Crowned Warbler (*Dendræca Coronata*), are two most frequently seen and both remarkable for the beauty of their plumage, though in this latter respect, that lovely little bird the Blackburnian Warbler (*Dendræca Blackburniae*), surpasses them all.

The pretty little Blue-Yellow backed warbler (*Parula Americana*) is said to breed in Canada, probably in the more northern parts of Ontario and Quebec, but I have never met with its nest, nor do I remember ever seeing it during the summer months. Two species, the Canadian Fly-Catching Warbler (*Myiodroctes Canadensis*) and the Black and White Creeping Warbler (*Miniotilta Varia*) frequently breed in our northern woods. Of those who take up their abode with us for the summer the best known and most familiar to most of us from its short but sweet and cheery song and its social confiding disposition is the Yellow Warbler (*Dendræca Æstiva*).

It has little fear of man allowing itself to be approached quite closely, but during the breeding season the little bird shows great

anxiety for the protection of its eggs or young, flying in front of the prying visitor or tumbling along the ground as if wounded after the manner of the partridge with wings and tail outspread, it endeavours by every artifice to attract the unwelcome intruder from the neighbourhood.

It is one of those birds occasionally selected by the Crow Bunting as a foster mother for its young, and not unfrequently the single egg of the latter may be found deposited among the five or six eggs of the Warbler.

Of all our summer visitors the most brilliant in plumage, almost tropical in its character is the Scarlet Tanager (*Pyranga Rubra*), which arrives from the south from the 10th to the 15th of May. The male bird is too well known to require description, but it may not be generally known that the female has none of the gorgeous colouring of the cock bird, but is olive green above and yellowish beneath, wings and tail brown, edged with olive colour, and the young males for the first season are colored like the females, but generally exhibit more or less of red feathers among the greenish ones. I have met with the nest and young of this handsome bird in the woods about Lake Simcoe, but only occasionally, and as a general rule they seem to disappear from this part of Ontario like so many of their companions, the Warblers, after a very brief stay in the early part of May.

Following close upon the arrival of the Scarlet Tanager, and often seen with it, comes that beautiful bird, the Crimson-breasted Grosbeak (*Zamelodia Ludoviciana*). In general it is a shy bird, keeping much in the forest, where it feeds mostly upon the seeds of the birch and alder, the tender buds and blossoms of the trees, and upon insects which it catches on the wing; but when the cherries are ripe in the gardens and orchards, it often approaches our dwellings, and certainly repays us for the little fruit it consumes by the delicious softness and melody of its notes. They are very numerous in the woods at Lake Simcoe, breeding there, and remaining with us until the middle of September.

Yet another visitor, whose gorgeous plumage quickly attracts attention to its arrival following the Tanagers and Grosbeaks, is the beautiful Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus Galbula*). Gliding from branch to branch in search of insects, the brilliant livery of the male renders him a conspicuous object, even if his clear, mellow whistling notes,

which may be heard at a long distance, did not attract attention. In the woods, the Oriole generally builds in some tall elm or gigantic button-wood tree; but their singular nests are occasionally found in our orchards, suspended from the extremities of the branches of the apple or the pear. The nest is woven, as you all probably know, in the shape of a purse or bag, and is generally attached to two or more forked twigs by threads of the silk weed, or fibres of other wild plants, and not unfrequently when they can obtain them by pieces of string or thread, which the bird picks up near the neighbouring houses. With the same materials mixed with hair, wool or tow, it interweaves a warm and substantial fabric of nearly six or seven inches in depth, the bottom part being lined with horse hair.

The White Browed Crown Sparrow (*Zonotrichia Leucophrys*) and the White Throated Crown Sparrow (*Zonotrichia Albicollis*), both arrive in May. The singularly sweet notes of the latter bird must be well known to all observers. I have observed that they are generally most musical immediately before rain or during the frequent showers of the early part of the season.

Any one strolling through the meadows or near the margin of some stream or reedy pond during the latter part of May, will often hear an outburst of the most curious, jingling, joyous, laughable medley of a song that any bird throat ever uttered, and if he catches sight of the singer he will see it nodding its head, quivering its wings and with open mouth rattling out its curious notes as if its very life depended on it; this is the Bobolink Reed Bird or Rice Bunting (*Dolichonyx Oryzivorus*). Its plumage is almost as curious as its song, a mixture of black, white and yellow, disposed in a sort of piebald fashion over the body.

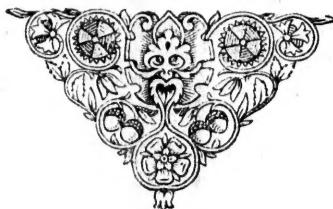
Much about the same period of the month a very different song may be heard, and no one who has listened to it as from the topmost twig of some tall oak on some fine May morning, the singer pours forth its sweet cadences so full of melody, but will forever scout the assertion so often made by those who know little of our Canadian birds that they are destitute of song. It is the Ferruginous Thrush or Brown Thrasher as it is sometimes called (*Harporynchus Rufus*) that is filling the air with melody, and in my judgment, except the Skylark and Nightingale of Europe, there are few birds whose vocal powers can compare with this thrush. If we desire a strong contrast we can have it in the harsh cry of another summer visitor

often seen with the Thrush and other fruit loving birds in our gardens later in the year—the Cat Bird (*Mimus Carolinensis*). Its curious harsh mewing like a cat, which it utters when alarmed, has earned for it the specific name of *Felivox* from some authors, which is certainly much more appropriate than *Carolinensis*. Nevertheless the Cat Bird is possessed of vocal powers which entitle it almost to be called the Canadian Mocking bird, for I have heard it imitate the notes of the Thrush and a host of other birds, and it will sometimes pour forth its “mocking” song until long after the sun has gone down.

Before the end of May the Wood Thrush (*Turdus Mustelinus*), and Wilson’s Thrush (Veery, *Turdus Fuscescens*), have arrived and their song may be heard in the woods at break of day and the last thing towards evening; and in the fields the sweet notes of the Meadow Lark (*Sturnella Magna*), are now mingled with the voices of the Song Sparrow and Baywing.

That bold and handsome bird the King Bird (*Tyrannus Carolinensis*), may be seen perched on some fence post, or outbuilding, or tall tree, ready to give battle to birds twice his own size, and especially to the Crow, to which he seems to have a special dislike. The various species of Fly Catcher, which come to us in summer, have now all arrived, and the Wood Pecker tribe, Golden wing and scarlet headed and others, are to be met everywhere as you pass through the fields and woods; but I must not go on with my catalogue any further, for I have already exceeded my proper limits in this paper, and I shall conclude with noticing a bird that may not be so familiar to many of you, which is always associated with the glowing heat of summer, when except in the early freshness of the morning the songsters of the grove are comparatively silent. It is then that from the deep shade of the woods, or from some cool thicket near our gardens, even during the hottest hours of the day, comes the soft but monotonous Coo-oo of the (*Coccygus Americanus*), the yellow billed Cuckoo. It and the black billed Cuckoo (*Coccygus Erythrophthalmus*), which is very similar in its habits, though the latter is, perhaps, not quite such a shy bird as the yellow billed, frequents our woods all through the summer, and unlike the European bird, show much care and affection in bringing up their young, although their nest is rather a careless fabric, being composed of a few dry twigs, mixed with weeds and grass, and with so little concavity as sometimes to endanger the safety of its young.

I have now only just faintly outlined, as it were, some of the "ornithological characteristics" of a *part* of the year. The details, if properly filled in, would occupy far too much of your time on the present occasion, even if I confined myself to the birds arriving in the spring and early summer. I must, therefore, defer any further notices of our "migrants" to another opportunity.



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